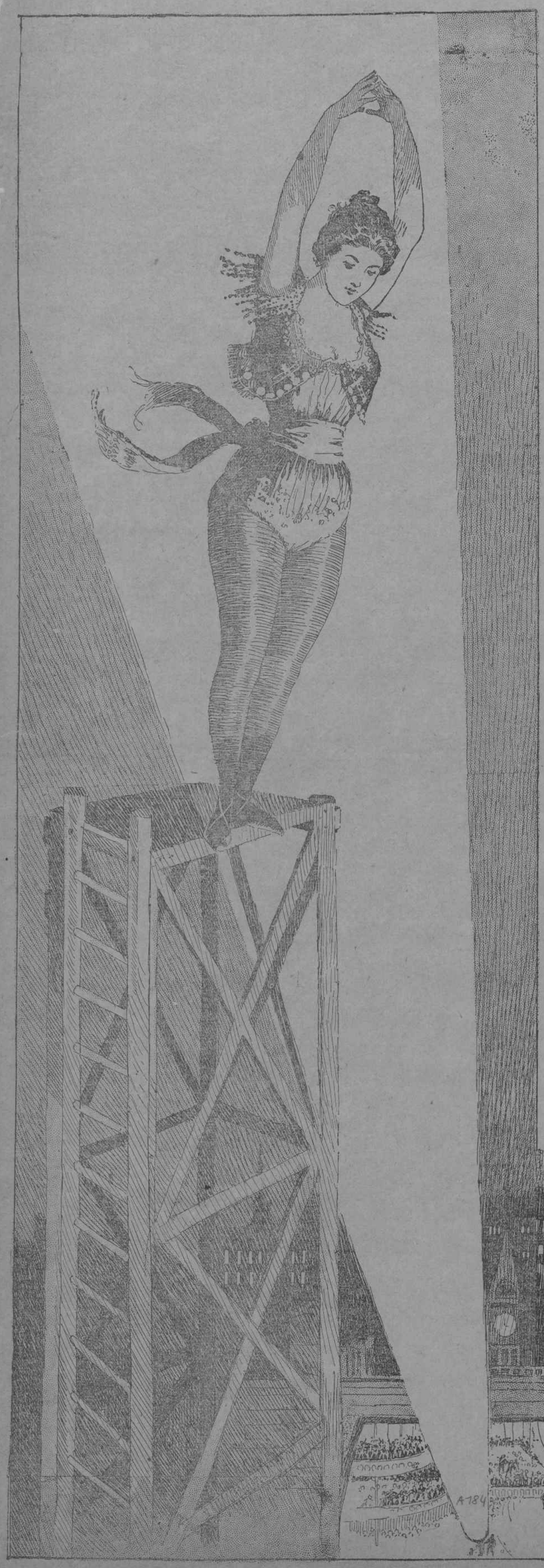

A DARING YOUNG WOMAN WHO STARTLED ALL LONDON.

Jumped from a Tower Forty Feet Above the Great Aquarium Roof and Landed on a Hard Board Platform, 152 Feet Below, but ======

London, July 11.—A week ago it was rumored about London that a woman had signed a contract to commit suicide at the Westminster Aquarium at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, July 8. The English statute known as the "Dangerous Performances Act" is not very strictly interpreted and British audiences are bloodthirsty, but the announcement made by the management of the great variety hall was so startling that it hardly seemed serious.

"A lady," said the advertisement, "has undertaken to jump from a scaffold reared forty feet above the Aquarium room to the wooden floor of the building. The management, however, does not guarantee that the performance will take place."

The Aquarium room is 112 feet above the floor. By cutting a hole in the roof and building a temporary tower above it, the drop—as a hangman would call it—would be extended to 152 feet. Little Hanlon's famous dive into the net at the Crystal Palace was only 135 feet, and, with a net to receive him, he was killed after a few weeks. Without a net twenty feet is quite high enough for any one. Plainly, the suggestion was a monstrous one. Experienced showmen and gymnasts all said that the woman would not only be killed, but be shockingly mutilated.

At the Crown Tavern, near Waterloo station, a resort which serves as a sort of exchange and employment agency for circus performers and acrobats, £50 forfeit was deposited by a well-known music hall agent who wanted to wager £500 that no one could jump fifty feet to boards and then get up and walk away. No one covered this wager, and yet every one knew that this extraordinary announcement at the Aquarium was more than a mere hoax, for the London managers are serious people.

The Aquarium (in which there ceased years ago to be any fish) is as well managed as any place of amusement in the world, and its enormous size especially adapts it for all sorts of aerial feats. It was here that Zazel was first shot out of a cannon. It was here that Fuller dived from the roof into a narrow tank containing seven feet of water. But the most daring of all the past performances could not be compared with the incredible foolhardiness of an attempt to jump 152 feet and strike on unyielding planks.

Two days before the time fixed for the jump a London evening paper published, "under all reservations," a rumor which purported to explain the advertisement. The "lady" in question was, said the Echo, a second-rate bare-back rider named Evans, who had been deserted by her husband, also a performer, and who had planned this sensational suicide as a means of attracting public attention to his misconduct and, in this way, revenging herself.

PARLIAMENT TRIED TO STOP HER.

On the same evening a member of the House of Commons rose in his place and asked if the attention of the Government had been called to the fact that a woman was about to make a spectacle of taking her own life, and whether the police would be instructed to prevent such an outrage against decency and order.

The Home Secretary replied that inquiry should be made; but, so far as could be learned up to the hour announced for the jump, the only result of the interpellation had been to give a great deal of free advertising to the Aquarium.

On Wednesday afternoon, at 4 o'clock, the Sunday Journal correspondent joined a knot of English newspaper men who were plying the manager of the Aquarium with questions; but there was no information to be had. "The advertisement," said the manager, "tells you all I know, except the name of the lady and my own opinion about her reasons for undertaking the act. I believe myself that she is going to do it, and I expect her to be here within a quarter of an hour. If she doesn't come, the other turns on the matinee programme will go on as usual, but, of course, I shall be sorry for your disappointment."

The disappointment came, and, no doubt, the sorrow; and everybody had a drink, and everybody went away except the Sunday Journal correspondent, who wanted very much to find out a little more about the woman whose heart had apparently failed her at the last moment.

There is a great deal in waiting, if a man only waits long enough, and at last the manager unbosomed himself. "You know, there really is something in this," he said. "There was no use trying to talk to those chaps, but I really believed that the woman was going to jump, and, what is more, I believe she will do it yet. You come back here at 10:30 to-night, and see. The truth is, I have had a wire from her this afternoon, and I believe she will do the jump to-night."

MAKING THE PREPARATIONS.

When 10:30 came, the Aquarium was crowded to the doors. For some mysterious reason, the public, who had not come in the afternoon when the performance was to have taken place, saw fit to come in the evening. Perhaps they cherished a vague belief that everything in London is always a little behind time.

When the regular performance was about half over, I caught a glimpse of the manager, and he nodded triumphantly at me. Then I set to work to study the preparations which had been made for the drop.

In the middle of the Aquarium floor, at some distance from the stage, is a little tank, into which a diver, sewed up in a sack, jumps every night, from a height of about fifty feet—"doing the Monte Cristo act," as it is called. Over the top of this tank attendants were laying a covering of heavy spruce planks, not less than four inches thick, about as unyielding as any surface well could be. The man who was superintending their work—a man with a large watch chain—made a great fuss about fitting together, with great exactitude, the edges of the boards, and when the platform was adjusted to his liking, he sprinkled over it a coating of greenish powder, almost as fine as flour. He used two pailfuls of this material, and as the platform was only about 20 feet in length by 15 feet in width, the boards were much more thickly covered than are those of a sanded barroom floor.

Up to the moment marked by this trivial incident, one has felt no more than a good-natured interest in the event of the evening, but as that powder thickened on the boards, until it concealed their texture, there began to be present to the observer's mind a certain sense of unwholesomeness.

One has seen sawdust thrown about the block at a French execution. Perhaps there lay in that some association of ideas. There was an uncanniness, too, in the mere fact that so great an audience had been convoked—at least twice as many people as usual. The tiresome vaudeville programme was drawing to its close. A reluctant bear had wrestled with a mangy Servian. If there was to be a thrill, there would not be long to wait for it, and hundreds and hundreds of stolid London middle-class people drifted in and took their places about the platform.

A brief item in the evening papers had recounted the disappointment of the afternoon. There was no reason to believe that the jump would be made that night, but more hundreds, and still more hundreds poured in, with a sort of shame-faced aimlessness upon them—each man disposed to ask his neighbor why that neighbor had come there. When there is rioting in the streets of a great city, it is with the same look of utter surprise that a mob recognizes its own increasing numbers.

The bear was led away, and the curtain fell, and then the manager appeared and made a little speech. A "lady" he said (for, or through it all, no more precise indication of her identity had been furnished), was going to be drawn up through a hole in the roof. Everyone looked up at the hole—far above the vague network of cordage which supported the apparatus of the Ongar Sisters, whose trapeze act had been one of the attractions of the evening—far above the long hanging festoons of colored lights. The opening was no larger than a cellar door, but those who stood nearly under it could see the frame work of the scaffolding above. Forty feet above this hole in the roof there was, the speaker said, a perch, and from this perch the "lady" intended to drop.

"I don't say it will be done," said the manager, "for that matter, I thought it was going to be done this afternoon, and she did not come here this afternoon. She is here now, and there is a rope that runs over a pulley, and she will be hoisted up to the perch, and if she wants to jump, she will jump; and if she don't want to jump, nobody will push her over; and all that I ask is that the audience will preserve strict silence." And then he stepped back, and the "lady" appeared.

She was young, and she was good-looking—good-looking after the circus fashion, if you please, but by no means uninteresting. Her hands were rather large and rather red, and very dirty, with that peculiar wealth of dirt that makes the observer wonder how circus performers keep so much dirt on their hands without its falling off. In her youthfulness and in the large brightness of her eyes, there was something so pathetic that when she put her hands behind her back, and looked up through the hole in the roof, people began to feel that it was very serious.

A stout man near me cried: "Shame! Shame!" and then blew his nose bashfully, as he heard his red-faced voice roll down the long nave of the building.

SHE JUMPED GAMELY.

A good many of us, I think, began to feel that if the girl were going to die, we ought not to be there to gape at her. I know that I quite forgot that I was there to make a report of what I saw, and perhaps my own private emotion of the moment was more pictorial than any studied description could be. She put her foot in the loop at the end of the long rope, and as she rose, the little field of limelight rose with her. The stage carpenter's crew were making quick work of hoisting her, but it seemed a long time before she slipped through the square opening in the room. From that height another light was thrown upon her. She stood quite alone on the edge of the small perch, and with my glass I could see her hair move in the night wind, for she was quite out of doors up there.

The man who had sprinkled the powder on the boards—the man with the watch-chain—came and looked at it again, as if to make sure that it had not been disturbed. At the most, it did not lie more than an eighth of an inch in thickness on the platform; it certainly seemed to be quite useless, and yet one felt that there lay in its minute distribution a precaution of grave importance. He stooped over and smoothed the surface of it with his hand, and then, looking up at the girl, called out: "Are you ready?"

For a moment there was no answer, and then a little, shrill, hurried "No" came down. It made one feel that there was a reluctance in the girl's mind.

I think no one of us would have been sorry if we had been told that the jump was not to take place. The stout man withdrew his umbrella from under his arm and screwed it up very tight, but did not raise his voice again. The ladies in the audience began to be very nervous. I discovered next day that I had been biting my nails. The question, "Are you ready?" was asked again. This time there was a longer delay, but the answer was "Yes" when it came—not an eager affirmative, I thought. It seemed to be a submission, rather than a statement of fact.

If any one had at that moment proposed to lynch the man with the large watch chain I should have seconded the motion. It seemed to me quite clear that he exerted an evil power. I wondered that I had not seen that from the first.

She was dressed in white tights, and she dropped like a handful of snow from the cornice of a roof. I think I could have drunk a glass of water while she was in the air. It seemed to me as long as that. I was leaning against the edge of the platform, my hand on the rough, unplaned end of one of the heavy planks.

She certainly did not weigh more than 140 or 150 pounds, but as she struck the noise and the jarring were of amazing violence. A column of dust arose; all of the sprinkled powder was in the air. When it cleared away, I saw her lying on the boards quite still, save for a little twitching motion of her shoulders, and her body had a broken look.

A bird looks so when it has been shot at a height and has fallen with its wings closed.

Then they picked her up.

The man with the watch chain took her under the arms; another man took her under the knees, and they lifted her and carried her away.

It was about twenty yards from the platform that had been built over the tank to the stage, and no one in the audience moved or spoke while the two men were taking their burden there.

A woman behind me whimpered like a child left alone in the dark. That was the only sound, except the shuffling of the two men across the floor. They made their way through the little space between the curtain and the proscenium arch, and when they had passed out of sight, the audience was still quite silent.

A light still shone on the little perch, 152 feet up in the air, and some little scattered rings of the greenish powder lay on the surface of the boards.

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There was no applause, no demonstration of any kind. Every one knew that the management would make some sort of announcement from the stage and waited to see what the announcement would be. After a wait of two or three minutes the orchestra played a Scotch air with a bagpipe effect introduced, and as the droning came to an end the "lady" was supported to the front of the curtain.

She did not walk, but she was erect, or almost erect, and the two men slid her along. She looked as if she was "suffering from concussion, and no doubt from internal injuries," as the reports of railway accidents say.

But she was alive at any rate; there had not been a tragedy.

How had she survived so terrible a fall?

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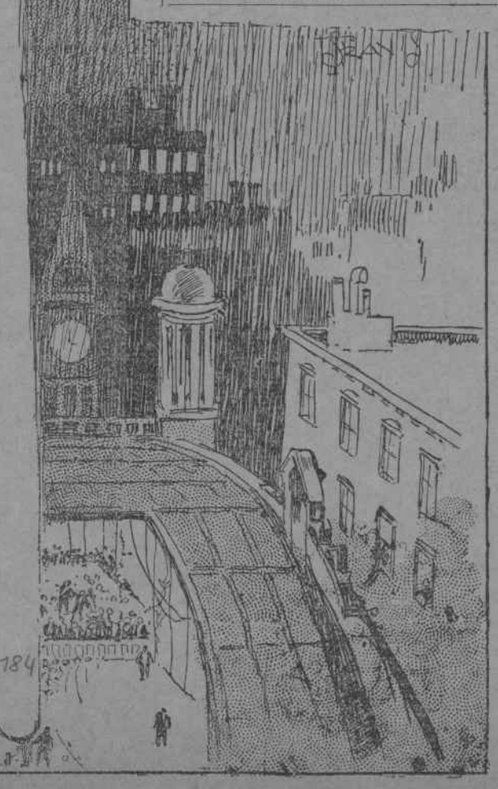
The correspondent of the Sunday Journal (who stood very close to the platform leaning over it, indeed), thought he saw. Just before she struck the planks, something leave her hands and fly up to the ceiling. It looked like a little hoop, and for an instant it hung above her head like a halo.

Was there a counterweight wire, accumulating weights before it passed over a sheave to her, and measurably retarding the latter part of her descent? If so, there had been a miscalculation, for the shock had certainly been a very severe one. H.

EATS POISON FOR A LIVING.

Poison eating, as a means of earning a livelihood, will hereafter be a possibility for all who care to adopt it.



One man, "Captain" Vetrio, as he styles himself, has for several years been gathering in the cash of those in this country and in Europe who wish to see him apparently endanger his life by swallowing poisons of sufficient quantities to kill a dozen men.

His performance has been described in the press of both continents, but it has remained for a New York physican, Dr. P. J. Salicrup, No. 20 Irving place, to reach a solution of the mystery with which Captain Vetrio's feat has been surrounded, though many noted doctors have pronounced it beyond the scope of medical knowledge.

Dr. Salicrup explained the secret to a reporter as follows: "I have been for many years deeply interested in toxicology, and have carefully studied Captain Vetrio's performance. It is undeniable that he eats sufficient poison of different kinds to kill a dozen men. I witnessed his performance while he was exhibiting in a museum in this city.

"This man eats enough poison to kill outright from ten to fifteen people, but the whole secret is in the fact that he does not eat only enough to kill one or two men, but fifteen.

"Arsenic paris green, phosphorus and 'Rough on Rats' are what medical men call irritant poisons. They act primarily by producing inflammation of the mucous membrane of the stomach and the intestinal tract.

"When irritant poisons are taken in very large quantities, as this man takes them, they produce in a little while such irritation of the stomach that they are involuntarily vomited before they have time to pass to the intestines, or, being absorbed, cause no other harm than the gastritis which he sometimes feels.

"He also takes some bismuth just previously to eating the other poisons. It is a noticeable fact that Vetrio eats the poisons just after coming upon the stage. The bismuth forms a sort of coat around the stomach, which for a short time prevents the toxic effects of the several other poisons. By the time Vetrio leaves the stage the different poisons have not had sufficient time to work themselves through the coating of bismuth formed in his stomach, and they are ready to be vomited.

"In the vomiting process the bismuth is ejected together with the other poisons, and he is ready to again go upon the stage and repeat his seemingly wonderful performance."

BOWERY GRAND OPERA NOW.

Grand opera for ten cents! Grand opera and freaks.

"Martha," "Cavalleria Rusticana," "Carmen," "Il Trovatore," "Mignon," "Tannhauser" and other gems of grand opera to be enacted in the Bowery museums! Such is the promise of an enterprising museum manager in that natural home of fun and frivolity. A more sensational theatrical innovation has never been suggested in New York.

The fact is that the odd sorts and conditions of humanity who patronize the Bowery museums have of late evinced a desire for something more elevating than the ancient freaks and Wild West melodrama. Roaring farce comedies no longer captivate the minds of the Bowerylites, and Dave Posener, manager of the Gayety Museum, after a thoughtful study of the wants and ideals of Bowery pleasure-seekers, has decided that nothing but grand opera will satisfy the cravings for the novel of Bowery audiences.

On August 24 the first operatic performance will be given, and the best works of Verdi, Flotow, Bizet and Mascagni will be included in the opening series. If the plan proves successful a Wagner series will be put on next.

Shades of Wagner and Verdi! Think of Wagner's "Tannhauser" and "The Meistersinger" butchered to make holiday for peanut venders, or of "Lucia di Lammermoor," with its grand mad scene, rendered by an ex-soubrette with a voice that would crack Bessemer steel! The Melbas, Calves and De Reszkes of this season of Bowery opera will be recruited from the ranks of the singers of the neighboring concert halls.

It is emphatically denied, however, by the projector of this startling scheme that the bearded woman will be pressed into the operatic service to do heavy villain parts or that the living skeleton will be obliged to do a ghost scene. Neither will the property man utilize the fat woman in the dull, sickening thud when the hero dashes the heartless villain from an awful height to his doom.

With grand opera at ten cents the corner bootblack and the Bowery barber will no longer regale their customers with accounts of the latest freaks, but they will discourse knowingly on the musical merits of the operas.

The barelegged street Arab will no longer whistle in his ear splitting high falsetto "My Pearl Is a Bowery Girl" or the "Sunshine of Paradise Alley." He will make life a waking nightmare for the luckless pedestrian who comes within range of his whistle by whistling the aria from "Lohengrin" or the grand song of the Bowery De Reszkes in some famous burst of melody.

And the fat woman, the ossified man and the dog-faced boy will no longer glorify the billboards in the Beardsley school of art, but instead we shall see pictures of the latest Bowery operatic stars, Mlle. Maggie Murphelia and Mlle. Annie Caseyo and other great prima donnas, who will nightly walk off the stage loaded with flowers and flushed with triumph.

Of course the field of the enterprising press agent will be measurably enlarged, and wonderful tales will be told of Mme. Maggie Klinereto's adventures in the green room of the Chatham Square Dime Museum just after the conclusion of "Carmen," in which she will sing the title role. The newspapers will tell of the romantic reunion of Pinkie Russel, the prima donna, in "Mignon" at the Empress Museum, with her aged father, who recognized her from the magnificent auditorium, and from whom she had been separated since childhood—a long, long time.

In fact, the new era in the theatrical productions in the Bowery museums promises to revolutionize the aim and purpose of that effervescent thoroughfare.

THE SUMMER GIRL'S STATIONERY.

The Summer girl's stationery, if it is up to date, is stamped with a monogram this season, in preference to her initials, or even her crest, if she is fortunate enough to own one.

And it is an entirely new monogram which adorns her letter paper. The letters are quite small and most artistic. They are stamped within a circle, which generally is highly decorated. A fad of the moment is to use white paper and have the monogram in silver or gold stamped upon a colored circle. The circle must be in the young woman's favorite color, and is decorated with either silver or gold to match the monogram.